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ABSTRACT

Ten reflections may be made regarding children's literature and its teaching. The reflections are as follows: (1) Teachers can make a profound difference in the lives of students and should attempt to do so. (2) Teachers of children's literature are a badly fragmented lot and need a common meeting ground where they can share their thinking. (3) The quality of children's literature has improved in recent years. (4) What was once the cottage industry of trade book publication is no more. Now that the publishing houses are owned by conglomerates whose chief concern is profitmaking, editors are prevented from taking risks in publishing books by unknown, promising authors. (5) Great publishing houses used to be known and respected for the quality of their backlists--but today backlists are becoming relics of the past. (6) The children's book publication, movie, and television industries are becoming more and more interconnected. (7) Increasing costs of publishing and increasing profit margins may affect the publication of children's books. (8) Television and film have dramatically influenced the form of children's books. (9) Basal systems that use literature as the basis of reading exercises pervert the essential purpose of literature--to entertain. (10) It appears that teachers may have failed to show students the importance of literature to the well-being of our culture. (GT)

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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE -- SOME REFLECTIONS

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GOOD AFTERNOON. I'M HAPPILY SURPRISED TO SEE SO MANY OF YOU HERE AT 4:30. EVEN THOUGH KANSAS CITY MAY NOT BE THE MOST EXCITING VACATION SPOT IN AMERICA, I KNOW THAT THERE ARE ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVES TO BEING HERE. A NAP IN YOUR HOTEL ROOM, FOR EXAMPLE. SO, I DO THANK YOU FOR COMING. AND FOR NAMING ME A PLATFORM SPEAKER, WHAT IN THE WORLD EVER THAT MAY BE, I THANK YETTA GOODMAN AND THE COUNCIL.

MONTHS AGO, WHEN I ACCEPTED THIS INVITATION, I WAS ASKED TO SUBMIT THE TITLE OF MY PRESENTATION. BEING UNABLE TO SEE SO FAR AHEAD, AND NOT THEN HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT WHAT I MIGHT SAY, I SUBMITTED THE INNOCUOUS TITLE YOU HAVE SEEN PRINTED IN THE PROGRAM - "CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, SOME REFLECTIONS."

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FAIR ENOUGH. INSTEAD OF CHANGING THE TITLE, I PROPOSE TO JACK IT UP AND RUN TEN REFLECTIONS UNDER IT. THESE TEN REFLECTIONS ARE NOT NECESSARILY LOGICALLY RELATED, BUT THEY ARE PSYCHOLOGICALLY RELATED IN THE SENSE THAT THEY GROW OUT OF MY OWN PERCEPTIONS, CONCERNS, AND AWARENESSES.

THIRTY YEARS AGO, I WAS FORMALLY INTRODUCED TO THE FIELD OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN AN UNDERGRADUATE COURSE AT OHIO STATE TAUGHT BY LELAND JACOBS. IT WAS AN EXPERIENCE THAT PROFOUNDLY ALTERED MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE.

THERE I WAS, A CRUSTY, FIVE YEAR NAVY VETERAN, WHO HAD MOST RECENTLY SPENT A YEAR AS A HARDROCK MINER IN COLORADO. A 27 YEAR-OLD MARRIED MAN WITH A SON, WALKING IN TO TAKE A SNAP COURSE IN KIDDY LIT. WHAT COULD BE WORSE TO ANTICIPATE? BUT JACOBS HOOKED ME. AFTER THAT COURSE, I TOOK TWO DEGREES WITH HIM AT OHIO STATE AND, WHEN HE WENT TO TEACHERS COLLEGE, I FOLLOWED HIM THERE AND TOOK A DOCTORATE.

THE RESULT IS THAT, DURING ALL OF MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE, LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS HAS BEEN MY CHIEF

INTEREST.

REFLECTION NUMBER ONE: THOSE OF US WHO TEACH AT ANY LEVEL MUST CONSTANTLY REMIND OURSELVES THAT WE CAN MAKE A PROFOUND DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OUR STUDENTS. OF ALL THE ARTS, TEACHING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND, AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING MELODRAMATIC, I SAY, THAT OF ALL THE ARTS, TEACHING IS THE MOST NOBLE.

LET ME TELL YOU OF AN EXPERIENCE I HAD WHEN I VISITED IN AUSTRALIA WITH REGINALD OTTLEY, THAT FINE WRITER OF THE YAMBOORA TRILOGY (BOY ALONE, THE ROAN COLT, AND RAIN COMES OF YAMBOORA). REG DROPPED OUT OF AN ENGLISH SCHOOL IN THE SIXTH GRADE, RAN AWAY TO SEA DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION SO HE WOULDN'T HEAR HIS MOTHER CRY BECAUSE SHE COULDN'T PROPERLY FEED HER CHILDREN. AND, AFTER YEARS AT SEA, BECAME A STOCKMAN IN THE GREAT OUT BACK OF AUSTRALIA. UNTIL HE WAS FORTY YEARS OLD, OTTLEY HAD NEVER EVEN THOUGHT SERIOUSLY OF WRITING FOR A LIVING. THEN, SEEMINGLY OUT OF NOWHERE, HE WROTE BOY ALONE.

ONE EVENING, AS WE SAT IN HIS MODEST LIVING ROOM IN QUIET CONVERSATION, I ASKED, "REG, WHAT IN THE WORLD EVER MADE YOU THINK YOU COULD WRITE?"

HE LOOKED AT ME AS THOUGH IT WAS A TOTALLY STUPID QUESTION, THEN IN COMPLETE SERIOUSNESS SAID, "I HAD A SIXTH GRADE TEACHER WHO TOLD ME I COULD."

WE MUST TAKE SERIOUSLY THE CHALLENGE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OUR STUDENTS.

REFLECTION NUMBER TWO: THOSE OF US WHO ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE ARE A BADLY FRAGMENTED LOT. AND, WE SHOULDN'T BE! WE NEED TO KNOW EACH OTHER, WE NEED TO COMMUNE WITH ONE ANOTHER. WE MUST SHARE OUR COMMON CONCERNS AND OUR COMMON INTERESTS. YET WE CANNOT. IT IS BAD ENOUGH TO SIT IN VIRTUAL ISOLATION FROM OUR PEERS NEARLY ALL YEAR ROUND. IT IS TRAGIC THAT WE CANNOT EVEN MEET ON COMMON GROUND AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR. BUT WE CAN'T.

EVEN HERE IN THE COUNCIL WE HAVE DIVIDED INTO TWO INTEREST GROUPS. ONE FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND ONE FOR ADOLESCENT LITERATURE. WE ARE KILLING OURSELVES WITH THE SAME DISEASE THAT IS RAVISHING EDUCATION EVERYWHERE. WE ARE OVERSPECIALIZING!

I'M REMINDED OF THE YOUNG MEDICAL INTERN WHO WAS DISCUSSING THE IMPORTANCE OF SPECIALIZATION WITH HIS OLD, COUNTRY-DOCTOR FATHER.

THE INTERN TOLD HIS FATHER THAT HE HAD CONSIDERED BECOMING AN EYE-EAR-NOSE-AND-THROAT MAN, BUT HAD DECIDED THAT THAT WAS TOO GENERAL. INSTEAD HE INTENDED TO SPECIALIZE ON THE NOSE.

HIS FATHER SARCASTICALLY ASKED, "WHICH NOSTRIL?"

WE ARE DICHOTOMIZED IN THE COUNCIL, AND YOU CAN FIND OUR PEERS IN THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION, THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION, AND THE ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE.

I AM NOT ADVOCATING THAT THOSE ORGANIZATIONS GET OUT OF THE BUSINESS. I AM ADVOCATING THAT ALL OF US DESPERATELY NEED A COMMON MEETING GROUND WHERE WE CAN SHARE OUR THINKING TO THE PROFIT OF OURSELVES, THE FIELD OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, AND TO THE ULTIMATE CONSUMER OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS--CHILDREN.

REFLECTION NUMBER THREE: CHILDREN'S BOOKS HAVE, IN MANY RESPECTS, GOTTEN BETTER SINCE I FIRST BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH THE FIELD. JEROLD BIEM'S TWO IS A TEAM AND MARGAURITE DE ANGELI'S BRIGHT APRIL WERE BOMBSHELL BOOKS WHEN THEY FIRST CAME OUT. MY PROFESSORS HAILED THEM, AND RIGHTLY SO, AS "LANDMARKS." NOW, I READ THEM WITH EMBARRASSED AMUSEMENT. YES, FOR THEIR TIME, THEY WERE LANDMARKS. BUT THEY REVEAL HOW NAIVE WE WERE. I SUPPOSE BEING NAIVE IS A CONSTANT STATE, WE MUST ALWAYS BE NAIVE ABOUT SOMETHING. JUST LOOK AT HOW, UNTIL VERY RECENTLY, WE WERE NAIVE ABOUT SEXISM.

IF ANY FIELD SHOULD HAVE BEEN FREE OF SEXUAL BIAS, IT WAS THAT OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE. MOST WRITERS FOR CHILDREN WERE WOMEN, MOST EDITORS OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS WERE WOMEN, MOST CHILDREN'S LIBRARIANS WERE WOMEN, MOST CLASSROOM TEACHERS WERE WOMEN, AND MOST COLLEGE TEACHERS OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE WERE WOMEN. YET, UNTIL THE VERY RECENT PAST, OUR LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN WAS GROSSLY SEXIST!

TO WHAT NEW DISCRIMINATIONS MUST WE NOW ATTUNE OURSELVES?

REFLECTION NUMBER FOUR: WHAT WAS ONCE THE COTTAGE INDUSTRY OF TRADE BOOK PUBLICATION IS NO MORE. AND, MORE'S THE PITTY. NOW THE PUBLISHERS ARE OWNED BY CONGLOMERATES WHOSE CHIEF CONCERN IS TO KEEP THEIR STOCKHOLDERS HAPPY--HAPPY WITH DIVIDENDS. AND, THEY ARE STOCKHOLDERS WHO MAY NOT EVEN KNOW THE CONGLOMERATE IN WHICH THEY OWN STOCK EVEN PUBLISHES CHILDREN'S BOOKS.

THE OLD-LINE FAMILY HOUSES OF 15-20 YEARS AGO HAD TOP LEVEL MANAGEMENT THAT WAS MADE UP OF BOOK PEOPLE WHO TOOK PARTICULAR PRIDE IN THEIR LISTS AND WHO HAD SUFFICIENT

BUSINESS WISDOM TO SURVIVE RATHER WELL IN OUR CAPITALISTIC ECONOMY. OF COURSE, THEY WERE NOT COMPLETELY ALTRUISTIC. THEY WERE CONCERNED OVER PROFITS, AND RIGHTLY SO. BUT PROFITABILITY ACCOUNTING HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY SINCE THE CONGLOMERATES MOVED IN.

UNDER THE FAMILY HOUSES, CHILDREN'S EDITORS WERE EXPECTED TO SHOW AN ADEQUATE PROFIT AT THE END OF THE YEAR. WITH THAT AS A GIVEN, THEY WERE PRETTY MUCH ALLOWED FREE REIGN. THEY COULD INCLUDE ON THEIR LISTS, WITHOUT MUCH CONCERN, FIRST BOOKS WHICH WERE OBVIOUSLY FLAWED, WRITTEN BY AUTHORS WHO SHOWED MUCH PROMISE, BUT WHO NEEDED THE GRATIFICATION OF BEING PUBLISHED IN ORDER TO MOVE FORWARD WITH SHARPENED SKILLS AND GREAT CLARITY OF INSIGHT. THEY COULD PUBLISH PRESTIGE PIECES WHICH THEY KNEW WOULD PROBABLY NOT SELL WELL, BUT WHICH WOULD ENHANCE THE REPUTATIONS OF THEIR LISTS. THEY COULD PUBLISH SO-CALLED PRECIOUS BOOKS WHICH HAD AN APPEAL TO ONLY A VERY LIMITED AUDIENCE. THOSE TIMES SEEM, FOR THE MOST PART, TO BE GONE.

TODAY, UNDER TOP-LEVEL MANAGEMENT WHICH OFTEN HAS LITTLE EXPERTISE IN THE INTRICACIES OF CHILDREN'S BOOK PUBLISHING, MANY EDITORS ARE SADDLED WITH LIMITATIONS THAT WOULD HAVE SERIOUSLY INHIBITED SUCH VASTLY TALENTED AND RUGGEDLY INDIVIDUAL EDITORS AS MAY MASSEY OF VIKING AND ALICE DALGLIESH OF SCRIBNER'S. TODAY, IN MOST INSTANCES, ACCOUNTABILITY IS NO LONGER FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE YEAR'S LIST, IT IS FOR EACH BOOK PUBLISHED. AND, WOE TO THE JOB SECURITY OF EDITORS WHO HAVE MANY BOOKS WHICH DON'T SHOW A PROFIT, REGARDLESS OF HOW WELL THEY DO OVER THE YEAR.

THE DIRECT EFFECT IS THAT FEWER RISKS ARE TAKEN AND WE WILL NEVER KNOW WHAT PROMISING AUTHOR OR ILLUSTRATOR MIGHT HAVE TURNED UP, WHAT MARVELOUS BOOKS, SUCH AS PHILIP REED'S <u>MOTHER GOOSE</u>, PUBLISHED BY JEAN KARL OF ATHENEUM, MIGHT NOW BE GRACING CHILDREN'S BOOK SHELVES.

TODAY'S EDITORS, WHO FOR THE MOST PART ARE A GREAT BUNCH, ARE CAUGHT IN A WEB THAT KEEPS THEM SO BUSY WITH

CORPORATE DETAILS DURING THE DAY THAT THEY MUST PERFORM MANY OF THEIR PRIMARY DUTIES OF EDITING IN THE EVENINGS AND ON WEEKENDS.

LET ME ADD HERE THAT IT IS MY IMPRESSION THAT IT IS THE EDITORS OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS WHO STILL DESERVE THE TITLE OF EDITOR, WHICH ACCORDING TO MY DICTIONARY IS "ONE WHO REVISES AND MAKES READY A MANUSCRIPT FOR PUBLICATION." THEY STILL WORK WITH THEIR AUTHORS FOR GREATER CLARITY AND ARTISTRY OF EXPRESSION! I FEEL THIS IS NOT NEARLY SO TRUE OF EDITORS OF ADULT FICTION WHO SEEM TO BE LOOKING FOR MANUSCRIPTS WHOSE RIGHTS CAN BE SOLD IMMEDIATELY TO FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCERS, AND WHICH CAN GO TO THE PRINTER WITHOUT TOO MUCH WORK ON THE EDITOR'S PART. SO, WITH RECKLESS ABANDON, THEY LEAVE THE EDITING TO US, THE READERS.

REFLECTION NUMBER FIVE: GREAT PUBLISHING HOUSES USED TO BE KNOWN AND RESPECTED AS MUCH, PERHAPS EVEN MORE, FOR THE QUALITY OF THEIR BACK LISTS AS FOR THE QUALITY OF THEIR CURRENT LISTS. TODAY, BACKLISTS ARE BECOMING RELICS OF THE

PAST. OLDER TITLES, WHICH WE WANT SO BADLY TO PUT INTO THE HANDS OF TODAY'S READERS, GO SO RAPIDLY OUT OF PRINT THAT THE FRUSTRATION, RESENTMENT, AND BEWILDERMENT OF THOSE WHO BUY BOOKS IS RAPIDLY GROWING OUT OF HAND.

THE MEANING OF THE DISAPPEARING BACK LIST IS NOT ONLY THAT THE BOOKS WE WANT OUR CHILDREN TO READ ARE UNAVAILABLE, BUT THAT TALENTED FREE-LANCE AUTHORS ARE FINDING IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN THEMSELVES ECONOMICALLY.

FREE-LANCE AUTHORS ARE DEPENDENT FOR THEIR LIVELIHOODS UPON HAVING A NUMBER OF BOOKS IN PRINT, AND EARNING ROYALTIES, AT ANY GIVEN TIME. SINCE THIS IS NO LONGER THE CASE WE ARE GOING TO SEE AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF BOOKS WRITTEN BY AMATEUR, WEEK-END WRITERS WHOSE TALENTS MAY BE UNPOLISHED, BUT WHO HAVE THE ECONOMIC SECURITY OF FULLTIME JOBS.

THE PROFESSIONAL, FREE-LANCE WRITER IS A BADLY ENDANGERED SPECIES!

THE ECONOMICS OF THE PUBLISHING BUSINESS MAY HAVE FORCED THIS SITUATION UPON US, BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT A HEALTHY ONE. THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY IS GOING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY. TODAY'S BOOKS, JUST AS TODAY'S AUTOS, ARE ALL THAT COUNTS. TO HELL WITH LAST YEAR'S BOOKS AND LAST YEAR'S CARS. WITH THIS BEING THE CASE, IT MIGHT BE WISE TO GET THE CONSUMER PROTECTION AGENCY TO FORCE THE RECALL OF FAULTY BOOKS THE WAY THEY DO OF FAULTY AUTOMOBILES AND TIRES.

TODAY, EDITORS SPEAK PRIDEFULLY OF THEIR FRONT-LISTS JUST AS DETROIT DOES OF ITS FUTURE MODELS, AND WITH NO MORE ASSURANCE OF THEIR PERFORMANCE.

REFLECTION NUMBER SIX: (I KNOW SOME OF THESE REFLECTIONS COME OUT SOUNDING VERY MUCH LIKE PREDICTIONS. I GUESS THAT'S ALL RIGHT WITH ME. IT IS BETTER TO HAVE ONE'S REFLECTIONS LABELED AS INACCURATE THAN TO HAVE ONE'S PREDICTIONS PROVEN WRONG.)

AGAIN, WE MUST LOOK AT THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY, AND ITS RELATION TO OTHER MEDIA, PRINCIPALLY FILM, BE IT TELEVISION OR MOVIES, AND THE TWO ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE INTERCHANGEABLE.

IT IS NO NEW KNOWLEDGE THAT MOVIE OFFERINGS AND TELEVISION PROGRAMS BASED ON CHILDREN'S BOOKS INCREASE CIRCULATION TREMENDOUSLY AND BOOK SALES TO SOME EXTENT, ALTHOUGH I'VE SEEN NO FIGURES ON THE LATTER. ECONOMICALLY SPEAKING, PUBLISHERS PROBABLY AREN'T OVERLY CONCERNED ABOUT CIRCULATION. BUT THEY MUST BE ECSTATIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF INCREASING SALES. THE MAJOR INHIBITORS TO USING FILM FORM TO INCREASE SALES HAVE, IN THE PAST, BEEN TWO-FOLD: FIRST, BECAUSE FILM FORM WAS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY BASED ON BOOKS, THE BOOKS WERE ALREADY PRINTED, SOMETIMES YEARS AHEAD OF THE FILM PRODUCTIONS. BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTY OF COORDINATION, NEW PRINTINGS OF OLD BOOKS WERE NOT SYNCRONIZED WITH FILM OFFERINGS. SECOND, GETTING BOOKS TO THE INTENDED AUDIENCE--CHILDREN--IS A LONG AND CUMBERSOME

PROCESS. FOR QUICK SALES, THERE ARE TOO MANY ADULTS AND TOO MUCH RED TAPE BETWEEN PUBLISHER AND CHILD.

THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION, THEN, IS TO PAIR THESE TWO ITEMS BY GOING TO FILM PRESENTATION FIRST, THUS CREATING A VASTLY EXTENDED MARKET, THEN CREATING A DIRECT SALES ROUTE TO THE YOUNG CONSUMER.

EFFORTS ARE MOST CERTAINLY BEING MADE IN THAT DIRECTION. TV TIE-INS WITH THE STAR TRECK LOGS, STAR WARS, AND STARSKY AND HUTCH ARE NOTABLE EXAMPLES WHICH HAVE SOLD TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PAPERBACKS THROUGH PAPERBACK BOOK CLUBS, BOOK FAIRS (WHERE THEY ARE RUNAWAY BEST SELLERS), AND TO SOME EXTENT, OVER-THE-COUNTER SALES.

WE ALL KNOW TODAY'S CHILDREN CARRY AROUND AN IMMENSE AMOUNT OF DISCRETIONARY WEALTH. OBVIOUSLY, THE INDUSTRY IS AWARE OF THE FACT. SO, MORE AND MORE, I BELIEVE WE WILL SEE TV PROGRAMS, AND MOVIES, WHICH HAVE GREAT AUDIENCE APPEAL, BEING TURNED INTO BOOK SERIALS WHICH ARE RELATED TO THE ORIGINAL (OF WHATEVER QUALITY) ONLY LOOSELY IN TERMS

OF CHARACTERS, SETTINGS, AND PLOTS, AND WITH LITTLE REGARD FOR LITERARY MERIT.

REFLECTION NUMBER SEVEN: WITH THE COSTS OF PUBLISHING EVER RISING AND PUBLISHERS ALLOWING THE PROFIT MARGINS OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS TO RISE TO THAT OF ADULT OFFERINGS, FIRST EDITIONS, WHICH ARE NOW PRINTED IN QUANTITIES OF 7,500 TO 15,000, ARE GOING TO HAVE TO BE INCREASED, BUT I DOUBT THAT THERE IS MUCH PROSPECT FOR A LARGER MARKET, WHAT WITH SCHOOL AND PUBLIC LIBRARY BUDGETS EITHER BEING HELD AT PRESENT LEVELS OR REDUCED.

SOME OF THE ECONOMIC ANSWERS ARE REDUCED OR ELIMINATED COLOR, A MOVE TOWARD CHEAPER PAPER AND BOOK CASINGS, AND AN INCREASE THE LENGTH OF CURRENT LISTS. ALL OF THESE REMEDIES ARE NOW BEING TRIED. WITH WHAT SUCCESS I DO NOT KNOW. BUT IF THESE REMEDIES DON'T WORK, ONE SOLUTION THAT IS APT TO BE TRIED IS TO ABANDON THE EFFORT TO MANUFACTURE RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBERS OF HARDBACKS, TURN TO HIGH-SPEED,

AUTOMATED PRODUCTION, AND DEPEND ALMOST SOLELY ON TELEVISION TO PRODUCE THE DEMAND FOR HUGE NUMBERS OF ANY GIVEN TITLE.

THIS SEEMS TO ME TO BE A LOGICAL EXTRAPOLATION BASED ON CURRENT CONDITIONS.

REFLECTION NUMBER EIGHT: JUST AS EVERY NEW MEDIUM IN THE PAST HAS INFLUENCED THE EXISTING MEDIA, SO HAVE TELEVISION AND FILM INFLUENCED THE FORM OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS. ALREADY THERE HAVE BEEN DRAMATIC CHANGES: FIRST-PERSON NARRATIVE, TREMENDOUSLY FROWNED UPON IN THE PAST, IS COMMON. IT IS MORE INTIMATE, MORE ACCESSIBLE TO THE READER, AND FAR LESS DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW. ACTION, FAST ACTION, WITH RAPIDLY COMPLICATING PLOTS IS IN, WHILE LENGTHY DESCRIPTIVE PASSAGES ARE OUT. WRITING, ON THE WHOLE, IS MUST MORE SPARSE NOW THAN IT WAS EVEN FIFTEEN YEARS AGO. PRINT FORM, IN ORDER TO COMPETE WITH TV, HAS BEEN FORCED TO CHANGE AND STREAMLINE. AND WE ARE BOUND TO SEE FURTHER CHANGES.

ONE OF THOSE CHANGES MAY BE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE TV

COMMERCIAL FORMAT FROM WHICH LAUGH IN, HEE HAW, AND SESSAMEE STREET GREW. SATURDAY MORNING CARTOONS PROFIT BY THE SAME BREVITY AND HIGH ACTION WITH CONSTANTLY CHANGING FOCUS. I'M CONVINCED THAT ROCKWELL'S HOW TO EAT FRIED WORMS GAINED TREMENDOUS POPULARITY WITH THE HELP OF THESE ELEMENTS, AND THAT SOBEL'S ENCYCLOPEDIA BROWN REMAINS POPULAR BECAUSE OF THEM.

MORE BOOKS, WORKING FROM SIMILAR FORMATS, ARE BOUND TO COME ALONG, BE WELL RECEIVED, AND INCREASE IN NUMBERS.

REFLECTION NUMBER NINE: BASED ON HINDSIGHT, I'M TERRIBLY SORRY THAT I EVER LENT MY VOICE TO THAT MULTITUDE WHICH CRITICIZED DICK AND JANE OUT OF EXISTENCE. USED PROPERLY, THEY WERE PRETTY GOOD FOR SKILL BUILDING AND NO CHILD, OR TEACHER, FOR THAT MATTER, WAS EVER UNDER THE ILLUSION THAT THEY WERE GREAT LITERATURE.

THE CURRENT BASAL SYSTEMS, NOTE THEY ARE NO LONGER BASAL TEXTS, IN ANSWER TO OUR CRITICISM, NOW INCORPORATE

GREAT CHUNKS OF GOOD LITERATURE TO THE PERVERSION OF THE ESSENTIAL PURPOSES OF LITERATURE.

THE PURPOSE OF LITERATURE IS, FIRST AND FOREMOST, TO ENTERTAIN THE READER, OFTEN IN HOPES THAT THE READER WILL, IN TURN, ENTERTAIN THE MEANINGS AND INSIGHTS CONVEYED THROUGH A PARTICULAR WORK. THE PURPOSE OF LITERATURE IS NOT TO PROVIDE EXERCISE MATERIALS THROUGH WHICH BASIC MECHANICAL READING SKILLS CAN BE ACQUIRED! IN FACT, WHEN LITERATURE IS SO EMPLOYED ITS ENTERTAINMENT VALUE IS NEARLY ALWAYS DESTROYED.

DOUBLE DAMAGE IS DONE. NOT ONLY DO CHILDREN WHO ARE LEARNING TO READ LEARN TO DISLIKE LITERATURE, BUT WELL-MEANING, IF UNINFORMED, TEACHERS THINK THEY HAVE PROVIDED GOOD LITERARY EXPERIENCES FOR THEIR STUDENTS. OF COURSE, WHAT IS MOST OFTEN THE CASE IS, THAT THE BASAL SYSTEMS DEVOUR SUCH MASSIVE CHUNKS OF TIME THAT NONE IS LEFT FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF HARD-EARNED READING SKILLS IN THE PURSUIT OF RECREATIONAL AND RE-CREATIONAL READING.

SOMEHOW THE MONSTER OF READING INSTRUCTION MUST BE TAMED AND PUT INTO THE SERVICE OF LITERACY. BY LITERACY I DON'T MEAN THE ACQUISITION OF MEASUREABLE FOURTH-GRADE READING SKILLS, WHICH MAY BE A FUNCTIONAL DEFINITION. WHAT I DO MEAN IS MY WEBSTERS' NEW WORLD DEFINITION NUMBER TWO OF "LITERATE: HAVING OR SHOWING EXTENSIVE KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE, OR CULTURE."

REFLECTION NUMBER TEN: BASED SOLELY UPON UNSCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE, CALL IT GUT REACTION IF YOU WILL, I DON'T THINK ANY GREATER PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IS NOW READING FOR RECREATION AND RE-CREATION THAN EVER DID. IF I AM CORRECT, THEN THE TEACHING PROFESSION IS FAILING. (THOUGH OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE CULTURE MAY ALSO BE FAILING, THERE IS LITTLE WE CAN DO ABOUT THEM.) AND, IF WE ARE, A MAJOR PART OF THE BLAME MUST BE PLACED SQUARELY ON THE THRESHHOLD OF INSTITUTIONS OF TEACHER EDUCATION. ALL TEACHER EDUCATORS ARE RESPONSIBLE IN GENERAL, BUT THOSE

OF US WHO TEACH THE LANGUAGE ARTS ARE RESPONSIBLE IN PARTICULAR. WE HAVE FAILED TO COMMUNICATE TO THE MAJORITY OF OUR STUDENTS A GUT FEELING FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERATURE TO THE WELL-BEING, PERHAPS EVEN SURVIVAL, OF OUR CULTURE.

WE HAVE FOUND THAT THE MAJORITY OF OUR STUDENTS AREN'T ESPECIALLY LITERATE WHEN WE GET THEM, AND HAVE EITHER FAILED TO RECOGNIZE THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF TRYING TO MAKE THEM SO OR, HAVING BEEN UNABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THE TASK, HAVE GIVEN UP THE EFFORT. BUT WE MUST NOT GIVE UP, BECAUSE ONLY LITERATE TEACHERS CAN INSPIRE CHILDREN TO BE BOOK READERS.

AND SO ENDS MY TENTH AND FINAL REFLECTION.

AS I READ AND RE-READ THESE OBSERVATIONS IT BECAME OBVIOUS THAT THEY SEEMED, ON THE WHOLE, PESSIMISTIC, AND THEY ARE.

"AM I AS PESSIMISTIC AS THEY SOUND?" I ASKED MYSELF. THE ANSWER IS AN EMPHATIC, "NO!"

YES, I'M PESSIMISTIC ABOUT SOME THINGS--LARGELY BECAUSE WE ARE LIVING DURING A TIME WHEN NEARLY EVERYONE SEEMS TO NOT BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING. SO MANY OF US FEEL HELPLESS. TO QUOTE A LINE FROM A BOOK THAT I DON'T PARTICULARLY LIKE, "BECAUSE HE WAS HELPLESS, HE WAS HOPELESS."

WELL, WE AREN'T HELPLESS, AS OUR OWN EXPERIENCE WILL SHOW. WE DON'T CURRENTLY HAVE SO MANY GOOD BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN BECAUSE ALL AUTHORS, EDITORS, CLASSROOM TEACHERS, AND LIBRARIANS FELT HELPLESS. A FEW OF THEM MUST HAVE FELT HOPEFUL, AND THOSE FEW MADE A DIFFERENCE. YOU AND I DON'T WALK INTO THAT ALL-TOO-RARE CLASSROOM OR LIBRARY AND FIND TRUE MEETINGS TAKING PLACE BETWEEN CHILDREN AND BOOKS BECAUSE EVERY TEACHER AND EVERY LIBRARIAN FEELS HELPLESS. SOME OF THOSE TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS FEEL HOPEFUL AND, BECAUSE THEY DO, THEY ARE HELPING YOUNG READERS FIND THOSE

LITERARY EXPERIENCES WHICH "LEAD THEM BEYOND THE THRESHHOLDS OF THEIR OWN AWARENESSES."

NOT EVERY STUDENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS GRADUATES WITH A DEGREE, OR DEGREES, IN HELPLESSNESS AND HOPELESSNESS. SOME TAKE THEIR DEGREES IN HELPFULNESS AND HOPEFULNESS.

THESE OCCASIONS ARE NOT THE RESULTS OF INCIDENTAL MAGIC. THEY ARE THE RESULTS OF HIGHLY COMPLEX AND COMPLICATED INTERWEAVINGS OF EXPERIENCE--BASED LARGELY, UPON HOPEFULNESS. IT IS OUR TASK, NOT ONLY TO <u>BE</u> HOPEFUL, BUT TO COMMUNICATE TO OUR CLIENTS, WHOEVER THEY ARE, THAT SENSE OF HOPEFULNESS.

AFTER ALL, SUCCESSFUL TEACHING CAN ONLY COME THROUGH AN ENLIGHTENED SENSE OF OPTIMISM.